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*The Expedience and Necessity of Wisdom and Innocence
towards a due Discharge of the Ministerial Office.*

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A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE
V I S I T A T I O N
OF THE
Rev. THOMAS D'OYLY, D. D.
ARCHDEACON OF LEWES,

Held at HASTINGS, on TUESDAY, JUNE 3, 1760.

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M DCC LX.



M A T T. X. 16.

— *Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

IT requires but a very flight and cursory view of the state of the world, at the time of the first planting of Christianity, in order to be convinced of the many and great difficulties, which they must necessarily encounter, who were ordained for the carrying on so unpromising a design, and for executing so arduous, and, to all human appearance, so hopeless an enterprize. The commission, with which they were charged, was nothing less, than to prevail on men to renounce their several most revered religions, to relinquish their darling customs and favourite institutions; to resign their ease, forfeit their honours and worldly emoluments; and to embark in a cause that was attended with numberless circumstances to terrify them, and devoid of every temporal motive to invite and allure them. To this end, they were to contend with the inveterate prejudices of the Jew, the gross idolatry of the Gentile, the interested bigotry of the Priest, the cavilling subtlety of the Philosopher, the blind superstition of the Vulgar, and the passions and vices of all men. Had the Apostles been remarkably eminent for their abilities and learning, signally distinguished by their rank and station, or of any considerable influence on account of their wealth and fortune, yet, even in these favourable circumstances,

they could have had but little hopes of success, in entering the lists against so many and such formidable adversaries. How discouraging then must have been the prospect, and how unequal the contest, between the potent efforts of an opposition, so firmly combined and leagued together, and the weak attempts of a few plain, indigent, and illiterate men, void of all skill and address; unpractised in the ways of the world; untutored in the insinuating arts of persuasion; and deficient in all those accomplishments and endowments, which men are generally apt to admire so much, and to be so much admired for?—

They were, it is true, appointed to promulge a most amiable and perfect religion, and one, which carried with it all the marks of its divine original; a religion calculated to give men juster and truer notions of God and of themselves; to exalt the dignity, enlighten the faculties, and purify the morals of corrupted nature; in a word, a religion equally promotive of social and private happiness, and most admirably adapted to compleat the present, as well as future felicity of all mankind. But how weighty soever these considerations might prove to ingenuous minds, and to candid and impartial inquirers after truth, yet would they but little avail against the united force and joint renitency of long-indulged habits, deep-rooted prejudices, predominant passions, and controuling interests; and all these backed by the jealousy of civil power and authority.

Such then being the state of the world, and such the seeming insufficiency of the Apostles for so great an undertaking; surely it must have required, on their part, the utmost prudence and circumspection, joined with the most exemplary and irreproachable conduct, to engage men to embrace their doctrine, or rather, to prevail on them not

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to persecute it. Now of all the precepts given them for obtaining these ends, and for procuring the desired and wished-for success to their ministry, none (so far as it depended upon mere human means and endeavours) seemed more proper, or more likely to prove effectual, than the advice given them by our Saviour, in the words of my text, *Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

Different, far different, blessed be God, are the circumstances of the times, in which we live, and those of the Apostles, and first preachers of the Gospel. Their's were the gloomy and distressful seasons of persecution; our's the milder and happier days of establishment: the civil sword was then unsheathed to stop the progress of Christianity; Kings are now become it's nursing-fathers, and Queens it's nursing-mothers: they had the difficult task assigned them of making converts to a new and self-denying religion, of laying the foundation of the Christian Church, and of raising it on the ruins of the Jewish Synagogue, and the Heathen Temples; our's is the easier province of addressing ourselves to those, who have been baptized into the Christian faith, educated in the knowledge of it's principles, and who acknowledge themselves to be the disciples of Christ, their Lord and their Master.

But notwithstanding this striking and glaring difference betwixt the circumstances of the Apostles' times and our's, it must however be confessed that there is some distant likeness and faint resemblance between them; the present Ministers of the Gospel having difficulties to encounter, which will require the utmost abilities and prudence to surmount. They too have reasoners to confute, prejudices to remove, the ignorant to instruct, and the vicious to reclaim; and therefore the words of our Saviour may with great propriety be addressed to them, since 'tis on several accounts their concern, as well as that of the first preachers

preachers of Christianity, if they would procure success to their ministry, *to be as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves.*

But the expediency, not to say necessity, of these two virtues towards a due discharge of the Ministerial office will better appear, by pointing out some of the principal difficulties which attend it.

To begin then with the disputers of this world, the professed enemies of our religion, who are most zealously bent on subverting that faith, for which we are earnestly to contend. It were needless to observe before this learned audience, that this is not a difficulty peculiar to the present times, but that men of this stamp and character have appeared in every age of the Church. And great probability there is, that there never will be wanting such, as long as irregular lusts and passions shall be capable of debauching the powers of reason, and setting men at variance with truth; as long as vanity shall be able to tempt them to disdain the common road, and to look upon singularity of opinion as a sure mark of superior abilities; or as long as spleen can excite a perverse spirit of contradiction, and dispose them to take exception at every thing, which suits not their particular humour and complexion. But though the cause of infidelity never has, and, as long as human nature is swayed by similar passions, probably never will want its advocates and friends; yet will the methods of promoting it, in different periods, be as different in the deceivers, as are the characters and dispositions of those, for whom they lie in wait to deceive.

In a religious and a virtuous age, when piety and good manners are in request, the designs of unbelievers will be carried on with more caution and diffidence, with more modesty and reserve; but in times of general corruption, over-run with libertine principles and practices, they will
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act with more undisguised openness, and more unguarded zeal. And surely it is no very favourable symptom of the temper of the present age to observe with what unrestrained insolence, and unprecedented licentiousness, the patrons of Infidelity have of late exerted themselves in seducing every rank of men from their steadiness in the Christian faith. For has not every expedient been put in practice, which ingenious and industrious malice could suggest, to cast an odium on religion, and to bring it into disesteem and contempt? Have not argument and wit, sophistry and cavil, banter and ridicule, all of them been employed in their turn, to prove Christianity an imposture, and the worship of God superstition? Have not the authors of these schemes, the more effectually to carry their point, affected a variety of shapes and disguises, acting one while with all the virulence of avowed enmity, and other while, under the mask of pretended friendship; now in the character of close reasoners and objectors in form, and then again, in that of looser and gentler essayists; at some times in the equivocal attire of raillery and irony, and at others, in the gross and indecent dress of sarcasm and invective? And is there not too much reason to fear, that in some one or other of these shapes, they have proved more successful than any good man, and true lover of his country, would wish to see them? For is not the eagerness, with which these writings are sought after, and the attention, which is usually paid them, an evident token of the approbation they meet with; and though the manifest purport of them be an insult upon religion, morality, and civil government, yet have they not been suffered to pass with fewer marks of publick displeasure than they most justly deserve? And as there is too great a disposition in mankind to be influenced by the authority of higher examples,

amples, so have not these pernicious tenets gained of late a more favourable reception, and acquired greater currency, by having stamped upon them the name of a noble and celebrated writer, who had distinguished himself by some ingenious performances on other subjects, and by having filled one of the most important and respectable offices in the state?

If then the short sketch, which has here been given, be a true picture of the state of things amongst us; (would to God there were less of truth in it, than I fear there is!) if Infidelity be not only gaining ground, but advancing with larger and bolder strides than usual, surely there is great occasion for the utmost exercise of wisdom in the choice of proper methods to check it's growth, and retard it's progress. When our adversaries are putting every artifice and stratagem in practice to pervert men from the truth; when they are, with all imaginable address and policy, setting up the wisdom of man in opposition to the power of God, and endeavouring to establish a kingdom of darkness by putting out the glorious light of the Gospel; and when they are carrying on these designs, not as heretofore, by secret and indirect methods, but systematically, as it were, and in form, doubtless the greatest prudence and circumspection is required, on our parts, to counteract their measures, to frustrate their pernicious schemes, and to disconcert their deep-laid plan of universal scepticism and infidelity. When they are furnished with all sorts of weapons for managing their attacks, it is by all means requisite that the Christian Ministry should be provided with armour proper to repell them. And that they are most amply provided with all the armour necessary for that purpose, will evidently appear by an appeal to those excellent vindications of our religion, and those solid and satisfactory answers

answers to every the minutest objection against it, which do honour to our Church and Nation. For in these the judicious and unprejudiced reader will find all the important and interesting points of controversy set in a true and just light ; the meaning of many difficult and obscure passages of Scripture ascertained ; it's seeming inconsistencies reconciled ; it's historical facts confirmed ; the excellency of it's doctrine displayed ; the evidence of miracles and prophecy, those fundamental pillars of Christianity, put upon a sure and consistent footing ; and the truth and certainty of our religion established upon the firmest basis, and most immoveable foundation. In some of them he will meet with such strength of reasoning and clearness of expression, such a depth of learning and fund of good sense, and all this managed with so good and candid an intention, that he will almost thank the Infidel for the pleasure and instruction, which his attacks upon Christianity have undesignedly procured him. For though these bold and repeated attacks have proved of the most pernicious consequence in other respects, yet, through the providence of God, who is able to bring good out of evil, have they at least been productive of this salutary effect, that they have excited more care and attention in weighing the evidence, and more accuracy and precision in explaining the doctrines of revelation ; and have provoked many able writers to employ their pens in it's defence, who might otherwise have thought such a task needless and superfluous. So that the struggles of this Anti-Christian faction, like the projected encroachments of an ambitious and a restless enemy, have added strength to what they meant to destroy ; and though, for a while, they have seemed to shake the top of the Christian Church, yet have they, at the same time, more securely settled it's foundation.

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But though persons of ingenuous dispositions, and the sincere lovers of truth will find themselves greatly confirmed in their faith by a careful perusal of the writings, I have mentioned, yet as there are but few, who have them in their hands, and fewer still, who have abilities, leisure, and inclination to consider them with the attention they deserve, so it is not to be expected that, directly and of themselves, they can have any considerable influence on the bulk of mankind. Not that I would intimate any suspicion of the works of Deistical writers being more read, or better understood by the common herd of Infidels. Alas! he must be but little acquainted with the world, who does not see that arguments levelled against Christianity are taken upon trust, and that any absurdity in favour of irreligious systems is swallowed down, without examination, with a most resigned and implicit faith; nay, that many, who are only acquainted with the general design of such writings, and not at all with the manner in which it is executed, have affected to adopt these notions, not as being convinced of the truth of them, but as being more agreeable to the gaiety of their temper, and more reconcileable with their manner of life and conversation.

Since then the unwearied diligence of the enemy, aided by the natural blandishments of vice, and an aversion to the restraints of the Gospel, is apt to prove so successful, and the confutation of loose and libertine principles is not likely to extend so far as the principles themselves; it must chiefly rest on the care and endeavours of the Parochial Clergy to prevent the contagion of this irreligious phrenzy, or in case some of that poison, which has been diffused with so liberal a hand, should have been unhappily sucked in, to expell it by proper and timely antidotes. Religion's last refuge must be in them, as being best able to maintain
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her cause, by the opportunities, they are furnished with, of laying open and exposing the weak objections, bad reasoning, and worse views, of all those, who wish her ill. And as some portion of the serpent's wisdom is requisite for the management of this work, so neither can it be conducted, as it ought, without a due mixture of the innocence of the dove.

Whatever provocation therefore we may have had from personal abuse, (for when Christianity itself is openly insulted and ridiculed, it's Ministers must expect a share in the same treatment) or whatever juster indignation may have been raised by indecent reflections on religion, it should never transport us so far as to make us betray any signs of violence or passion, or tempt us to exceed the bounds of candor, good manners, and moderation. Zeal for error hath indeed a natural tendency to make men fierce; but surely a zeal for true religion should rather soften their dispositions, inspire them with cool and dispassionate behaviour, and render them meek, peaceable, and gentle unto all men. No intolerant principles, or persecuting spirit, will ever find a place in that breast, which is influenced by no other motive but a prudent zeal for the honour of God, and a sincere desire for the happiness of mankind. In a word, whilst we are actuated by that principle, and that only, we shall shew by an engaging and conciliatory conduct, (which may possibly make converts of those, on whom the strongest arguments can make no impression) that we mean not to insult over their errors, but to instruct them in the truth, and that we have a much better claim to that honourable title, by which they, on all occasions, affect to distinguish themselves, THE LOVERS OF FREEDOM AND TRUTH.

But I proceed to consider another difficulty, which occurs in the discharge of the Ministerial office, I mean, that of prejudice. And perhaps it might have been judged more proper to have given this the first and leading consideration, because till this obstacle be removed, all other difficulties are absolutely unfurmountable. For in vain shall we employ our arguments to convince the Infidel, our instructions to enlighten the ignorant, or our advice to reform the libertine, as long as the mind is held under the power and dominion of a passion, which is capable of rendering the application of our best talents useless, and the exertion of our utmost endeavours ineffectual. The removal therefore of this is an object well worth our care and attention; though it must, at the same time, be acknowledged, that it is a task, which is to be managed with the greatest delicacy and skill, and is usually attended with more than ordinary difficulty, inasmuch as the source of it is frequently unknown, as it slides insensibly into the mind, is founded more in humour and caprice than reason and judgment, and takes its rise from a variety of circumstances, many of them very trivial and insignificant. However, if we take prudence and innocence for our directors and guides, we shall be best able to shelter ourselves from the baneful influence of this malevolent affection, whether it be originally founded in an aversion to religion itself, or in a personal dislike to its ministers; for so malignant and diffusive is its force, that it easily extends itself from the doctrine to the teacher; or, if the first bad impressions reach no farther than the man, they never fail in the end to affect the credit of his doctrine.

Are there then prejudices entertained against the Gospel on account of the supposed difficulty of practising its precepts? Is the heart prepossessed against a system of laws, which

which thwart some of it's favourite inclinations, and are deemed ungrateful to flesh and blood? The discreet Pastor, fully sensible of the ill effects of a prejudice suggested by the strength of natural propensities, will assiduously apply himself to the raising more benign and friendly dispositions towards religion, by drawing it in it's most lovely colours, and it's most inviting form. To this end, he will endeavour to shew, that the practice of true religion affords a much higher and nobler pleasure than any of those carnal ones, which it forbids; that the restraints it lays us under are no other than what both reason and interest recommend to our choice; that Christianity, though it be a grave and serious, yet is it by no means a sour and burthensome, a hard and impracticable institution; that there is room enough, within the compass of our duty, and consistently with the peace of a good conscience, and the hope of future happiness, to provide convenient pleasure for every sense that God has endued us with: upon the whole, he will represent the service of Christ, when compared with the tyranny of inordinate appetites, as perfect freedom, and will evince *his yoke to be easy, and his burden light*.

Have prejudices been occasioned by a forbidding austerity, and a rigid exaction of greater degrees of perfection than is well compatible with human frailty? Go to the school of wisdom, and learn of her to render the Ministerial character more acceptable by gentleness, affability, and all kind of innocent and lawful indulgence. Such a conduct has a natural tendency to engage the affections of men, and to win them over to the cause of virtue; whereas severe gravity and sullen moroseness will personally disgust, and so obstruct that share of esteem, which is necessary to the very being of a profession, whose principal end is to instruct and to persuade.

On the other hand, has levity of behaviour, and a few instances of inadvertent conduct made unfavourable impressions on the mind? Here again, wisdom will direct us to such rules of suitable decorum, and becoming sedateness, as will be most likely to erase them. And to excite us the more to a constant observance of propriety of deportment, and consistency of character, she will inform us, if we can possibly stand in need of such information, that the world is ever too ready to improve the smallest obliquity observable in the Clergyman's conduct, and that notwithstanding the arduousness and delicacy of his function, yet so little indulgence is shewn him, that real crimes in other men are more easily overlooked than mere indiscretions in him.

Have prejudices been raised by too much warmth about matters of little or no consequence, or too much indifference about things of the highest importance? This will be best avoided by not laying, on one hand, too great a stress on the embracing such opinions, as have no authority of God to make them sacred, or running out into an unwarrantable fondness for such things, as he hath nowhere established; and, on the other hand, by expressing, on all occasions, a due and becoming zeal for the cause of insulted religion, and derided virtue; and a just and proper indignation at every attempt to countenance impiety, or to patronize vice.

It were impossible, within the compass of a discourse of this nature, even to hint at all the various sources of prejudice; but there is one, more common perhaps than any other, of which I have designedly taken no notice, because with our utmost prudence and innocence it will not be in our power to avoid it, I mean, the prejudices of the worldling and voluptuous, the dissolute and immoral.

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For if by giving advice, which such in general are backward to take; and by setting examples of regularity and virtue, which, in this degenerate age, they are not inclined to follow; if by exhorting them to bridle their unruly appetites, and to restrain within due bounds their eager and darling pursuits after pleasure, honours, and wealth; if, I say, such examples and such exhortations expose us to hatred and ill-will, we must be content to bear it; nor need we be very uneasy under it, since these are such prejudices, as it will ever be a real honour to us to have deserved.

Another difficulty, which will frequently give the Christian Minister no small degree of trouble, is the difficulty of instruction; which, though owing to various other causes, (such as the vanity of some, which inclines them to think they need no instruction, and the indisposition of others, which makes them indifferent, whether they know any thing, or nothing of religion) yet is it principally to be ascribed to a prevailing species of ignorance very observable in most. And though a complaint of this nature, in so enlightened an age, may appear somewhat extraordinary, yet, certain it is, that to whatever height and perfection the arts and sciences may have been carried, our advancement in spiritual knowledge has, generally speaking, by no means kept equal pace with our improvements in other branches of more polite and fashionable learning. For is it not a sad and melancholy truth, that there are some, who, for want of proper culture in their infant and early years, are perfectly unacquainted with the first and plainest principles of religion, the very elements and rudiments of Christianity, who labour under a deplorable and fatal blindness in divine matters, and know no more of the terms of the Gospel, than if it had never been revealed?

And

And are there not others, even men of rank, and birth, and fortune, who, though they have had the advantage of a liberal and learned education, nay, and made considerable proficiency in other parts of literature, are yet scandalously deficient in the knowledge of such things, as are most necessary to be known, even of those great and important truths, which lead to happiness and salvation? And is there not great reason to suppose that the enemies to religion are too well acquainted with the general ignorance of our people in spiritual affairs? For have they not taken all the advantage, which such a circumstance could give them, of making gross and palpable misrepresentations of Scripture, and of obtruding old, borrowed, and refuted objections, dressed up perhaps in a somewhat different form, with all the air of novel discoveries? And is not the alarming progress of some modern Enthusiasts, who are industrious in unsettling the minds of many well-meaning persons, chiefly owing to the ignorance of those, who become a prey to their unwarrantable, though too successful methods of delusion?

Such then being the grossness of ignorance in *many*, so apparent the deficiency of religious knowledge in *more*, and so fatal the consequences of it in *all*, can any thing be thought more worthy a preacher of the Gospel, than to apply himself with all his care to instill into the void and uninstructed mind the fundamental principles and doctrines of Christianity, to infuse just and true notions of the most interesting and important points of religion, to establish men's faith upon firm and rational grounds, and to furnish them with clear and satisfactory reasons of the hope that is in them. And as this is a work, which will be attended with some labour and difficulty, (for the doctrines of religion are not to be taught in a slight and perfunctory

perfunctory manner, but to be assiduously and repeatedly inculcated) so will it require no small measure of wisdom and judgment, to execute it in such a method, as may prove most useful and instructive. It will therefore ever be a point, which a discreet and conscientious teacher will have in view, to acquaint himself with the natural capacities, as well as moral improvements, of those to whom his discourses are to be addressed. And as he will be less solicitous to display his own abilities than to procure their good, will aim less at being admired than being understood, so, after having made choice of subjects every way adapted to their circumstances, he will endeavour to manage them in a manner adequate to their understandings. New and uncommon and merely speculative topics he will industriously avoid; nor will he affect to treat any point in a too refined and uncommon way, as it can never answer any wise and good end in popular assemblies. In short, when experience and observation have taught him, not only the spiritual wants, but also the intellectual capacities of his audience, he will make so prudent a choice of his subject, and will handle it in a method so pertinent and judicious, as is most likely to answer that important end of his office, of which we are now speaking.

But it is time to take a view of the Christian Minister contending with the vices and corruption of the age; which, as it is the last difficulty I propose to touch upon, so perhaps is it the most considerable of all; at least, if there be any regard due to that maxim of a venerable Sage of antiquity, *that all arts and sciences have less of difficulty in them, than that of making men good*. It would, I am sensible, be rather an indication of a peevish and querulous temper, than of a perfect knowledge of the world, to complain of the extreme degeneracy of the present age, and to represent it as the worst, in all respects, of any that

have preceded it. The profligacy of the times has always been a common and popular topick of declamation, which shews it to have been founded more in that foible of our nature, a propensity to complain, than on any exact and impartial survey of the moral state and condition of the world. But though the prevalence of wickedness in general has been much the same at all times, yet has it undergone such a variety of changes, and appeared in such a diversity of modes and forms, that different ages have been remarkable not only for different, but even opposite vices. Atheism and Infidelity have been the distinguishing characters of one period; superstition and credulity of another: one while hypocrisy, and great pretences to godliness, have prevailed; at another time open profaneness, and an affected disregard and contempt of every thing sacred, have had their run: unsocial parsimony, and too close an attention to our private concerns, have been the reigning vices of one age; whilst luxury and excess, prodigality and intemperance, have been as remarkable in another. Now it requires no extraordinary share of sagacity and penetration to point out the peculiar complexion and colour of the present age: the most superficial observer cannot but perceive, that an insatiable love of pleasure, an unmanly levity of temper, an entire dissipation of thought, interested for little else but the events of play, which is now become the most important concern of life; and an aversion to every thing grave and serious, are the striking and characteristick features of modern times. It were well, if the pleasures thus eagerly pursued were always innocent, and nothing were sought after but a circle of vain and trifling amusements; but candor itself must own, that many forbidden gratifications and sinful indulgences have not only lost all check and restraint of shame, but are even ranked in the number of genteel and fashionable accomplishments. Vice being thus grown
reputable,

reputable, and, instead of seeking concealment and disguise, affecting to display itself in full view of the world, dressed in it's gayest colours, and fraught with it's most alluring baits, it has, as might reasonably be expected, widely extended it's dominion, and captivated almost every order and degree of men. If then there are such unfavourable symptoms of an universal corruption of manners, and of principles too; if the former are unrestrained by any sense of shame, and the latter uninfluenced by any sense of religion; if vice, instead of betraying it's natural timidity, has assumed an air of insolence and pride; how arduous and how discouraging, in such circumstances, must be the province of those, whose endeavours are bent on checking the career of growing wickedness, and restoring the credit of declining virtue? To make any sober and serious impressions on minds intoxicated with full draughts of pleasure; to sow the seeds of religion and virtue in a soil over-run with loose principles and immoral practices; to prevail on men, wedded to the gratification of sensual appetites, to lend an attentive ear to the voice of reason; and to wean from confirmed habits of voluptuousness those, who, from their very infancy, have been trained up to a life of softness, ostentation, and expensive folly, is an undertaking, which, though attended with great labour and difficulty, must yet be accompanied with greater degrees of wisdom and art. And the wisdom, which is so necessary a qualification for the management of this work, is not a faculty, which is to be learned by rule, so much as by observation and experience of the world: it is not to be acquired from general maxims, which are of little or no use; but from a thorough knowledge and acquaintance with mankind; a perfect understanding of their different geniuses, capacities, and educations; their various employments and pursuits; but above all, their

leading principles and governing passions, which are the master-springs of action, and the regulators of every movement of the soul. Without a competent knowledge of this sort, the Preacher, however qualified in other respects, will not be so far a master of address, as to be able to make his way to the favourable opinion of his hearers, without which 'tis hardly to be expected he should be instrumental in doing much good. For, if the doing of good be a point which he has sincerely at heart, he must take some pains to render himself and his discourses acceptable by all honest methods, and must endeavour, after the example of *St. Paul*, *to become all things to all men, that so he may by all means save some.*

And as he will strive by a suitable address to accommodate himself to the various capacities and conditions of men, so will he employ such different arguments and considerations, as are most likely to make an impression upon the respective frames and dispositions of their minds. With this view, he will thoroughly acquaint himself with all the pretended foundations of morality, with every obligation to virtue, and with all the motives and excitements to the practice of religious duties. The natural and essential difference of things, the instinctive moral sense, and the awful and interesting will of God, that admirable and triple provision for the support of virtue, will, each of them, be urged in it's turn, and insisted on, on proper occasions. For moral rectitude and obliquity may prevail on the rationalist to forsake his vices; the lovely and attractive charms of virtue, and the odious deformity of vice, may probably lay hold of the ingenuous libertine; and the ill effects of immorality upon our health, our fortunes, the peace and tranquillity of our minds, may reclaim the gross sensualist, and one, who is not capable of being wrought upon by any worthier motive. Nor will he dwell on each of these considerations

considerations singly, but urge them all jointly, and enforce them with those powerful and engaging functions peculiar to the Gospel institution.

But as men are not apt to be duly affected with exhortations of a publick nature, so, besides the general dissuatives from vice delivered from the pulpit, he will often find it necessary to employ private admonition and reproof, the management of which is perhaps the nicest and most delicate part of the Ministerial province. And therefore, lest he should exasperate rather than correct, and instead of curing the malady render it more malignant, he will endeavour to administer this unpalatable, and, generally speaking, offensive medicine, with the utmost prudence and caution, by attending to, and laying hold of the most favourable opportunities, which present themselves; more particularly, the seasons of sickness, and days of adversity, when the mind is usually in the best disposition, most open to instruction and advice, and most susceptible of good and religious impressions.

And he will be animated with the more zeal in the discharge of these several duties, when he reflects how much the Publick is interested in the success of his endeavours to put a stop to evils, which are, in some measure, interwove with it's very frame and constitution. For 'tis a melancholy consideration, that that circumstance which renders this nation the admiration and envy of all others, I mean, the full and undisturbed enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, should be productive of any evils to lessen the value of so great a blessing, or that any foul and polluted streams should be derived from so fair and pure a source. But certain it is, that through the high and mistaken notions, which some men entertain of liberty, and through the great tendernefs of others not to make any the least, and most distant encroachments upon it, many libertine principles,

ciples, and licentious practices have been introduced of late with too much boldness on one hand, and tolerated with too much lenity on the other. Now the weaker are the restraints of civil authority, and the greater are the relaxations of publick discipline, so much the more skilful should be the address, and the more earnest the exhortations of the spiritual Pastor, that an inward sense of duty, and the ties of religion may work that reformation in the manners of the people, which is little to be expected from any other quarter.

But though the abilities of the Clergy, when discreetly exerted, may be thus greatly conducive to the interest of religion and virtue, yet will they be little available to these good purposes, unless accompanied with innocency of life, and an unblameable and exemplary conduct. The truth is, the generality of mankind are more eager to put in practice what they see done, than what they are told 'tis their duty to do; and therefore the daily sight and influence of an uniformly good example will furnish more constant and useful lessons of instruction than the most ingenious and elaborate discourses delivered in publick, or the most prudent and seasonable advice administered in private. It will most effectually recommend our most excellent religion, display the beauty of holiness in the most engaging light, and make men enamoured with the graces and virtues of a Christian conversation. And this is a way of advancing God's honour, and the credit of the Gospel, which is equally in every man's power. For though we may not, nor is it necessary we should, all have abilities to distinguish us as writers for the Gospel, yet we may all live for the Gospel, and there is something so divine and amiable in the life of the true Christian, as will plead the cause of our religion with greater force and energy, than the most refined reasoning, or the most commanding eloquence:

quence : for in such a life Christianity is, as it were, embodied and made visible to the eyes of the beholders ; and it only wants to be seen and known, in order to it's being admired and beloved. And therefore it is, that our Lord calls upon his Disciples, *to let their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father, which is in heaven.*

Thus have I enlarged, perhaps longer than your patience can well excuse me, upon the several difficulties I at first proposed to consider ; and though I am sensible that there are many more besides those which I have touched upon, yet these will, I hope, be sufficient to prove the expedience and necessity of the two virtues recommended in my Text : Virtues, which must ever go hand in hand together, and like friendly allies, lend mutual aid and assistance to each other. For wisdom, without innocence, is nothing more than designing subtlety and worldly cunning ; and innocence, without wisdom, is little better than weak and childish simplicity : but when these two qualities are combined together, they add a beauty and lustre to each other, and constitute the amiable and goodly compound of harmless prudence, or virtuous discretion.

It were easy, would the time permit me, to shew at large the danger of separating them from two very plain and obvious examples. The Church of Rome, who has but little studied the harmless disposition of the dove, has done infinite disservice to the religion of Christ, by availing herself only of the wisdom of the serpent. And the intemperate proceedings and dangerous excesses of our modern Enthusiasts, so entirely subversive of all established decency and order, plainly prove what mischiefs may be done, even by the profession of superior degrees of piety, when devoid of prudence and discretion.

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To conclude, if the circumstances, I have pointed out, are sufficient to evince the difficulties attendant on a due discharge of the Pastoral office, so do they, at the same time, most amply demonstrate the use and necessity of the Ministerial order. For if there was not a set of men duly qualified and properly appointed to explain the principles of our most holy religion, to enlighten the understandings of the ignorant, and to reform the manners of the vicious, it is scarce to be conceived what a multitude of loose, unsettled, and inconsistent opinions, what a veil of thick darkness and gross ignorance, and what a deluge of vice and immorality would universally prevail, and overspread the land. For if, notwithstanding the many and frequent opportunities of religious instruction; if, in spite of the most powerful and cogent dissuatives from vice, there is still such a deficiency of spiritual knowledge, and such a general corruption of manners, how deplorable, and beyond conception wretched, would be the state of the world, if these helps and assistances were wanting!

And blessed be the Divine Providence, which, in different ages, has successively raised up such strenuous and able advocates of our religion, and such bright and illustrious patterns of virtue and goodness. May there never be wanting such ornaments to our Church, men as much distinguished by their abilities and learning, as by their piety and morals, to the disappointment of all it's enemies, and the encouragement of it's well-wishers and friends; but above all, to the furtherance of the Gospel, and the glory of Almighty God.

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